

## JOB ADVICE: OFFICE LUNCH ETIQUETTE

Unless you're a high-powered partner at a Big Four accounting firm who routinely charges \$1000 lunches and dinners to your clients, you probably



sometimes bring a bag lunch to work.

Fighting over lunch times, lunch locations, and even the lunches themselves is a major source of interpersonal friction at offices. But it's totally unnecessary. Just be polite! **How long should someone else's food sit in the office fridge before I can claim it?** Um, never? Theft is theft, even if the food has been abandoned. Go buy your own food, Oliver Twist. **Someone stole my lunch. What should I do?** Here's what *not* to do. Don't make a scene. Don't try to turn it into a big deal. Don't go around the office "investigating." Calm down, and go buy another lunch. Eat it. Then mention to either your superior or the HR manager what happened. If it keeps happening, let them handle it. If it's not getting handled, hide your lunch in your desk. Right now, a thief is stealing lunches, and he or she is the problem. Make the issue bigger than it needs to be, and *you* become the problem. **Everyone is complaining that my lunch is too smelly. Don't I have the right to eat whatever I want?** Sure, that's what the Revolutionary Army fought and died to protect -- your right to make your co-workers miserable with the stench from your Haggis and Vieux Boulogne lunch plate. Have your Tony Bourdain-ian adventures in eclectic world cuisine at home. **How long should that old, mold-covered Subway foot-long tuna on Italian herbs & cheese bread sit in the fridge before it's thrown out?** Someone should clean the fridge every Friday. This can be hard if no one in the office has "housekeeping" in their job description. I say get the HR manager to do it. But don't try to rotate the responsibility -- it'll never get done. **Someone is sitting in my spot in the break room. How do I politely make them give up my seat?** What is this, 9th grade? You don't have a personal "spot" in the break room. If you want absolute control of your dominion, eat at your desk. **I'm going out to lunch. Do I have to invite everyone in the group?** Yes. You do. It's not cool to grab four of the five people in your group and head out for lunch. If you're going to be selective about your lunch partners, then be discreet. Otherwise it's like Elementary School - everyone get invited to the party. **My boss loves to hold meetings at lunch time. Shouldn't he feed us?** First of all, if you murder this boss, no jury will convict you. That said, yes -- if your ass-hat boss is going to steal your lunchtime, then he or she should provide a catered or delivered lunch, enough for everyone, either on the company's dime, or his or her own. Got more office lunch advice? Let us know in the [comments!](#)